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RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHDC  
RHMFIUU/FAA NATIONAL HQ WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS ABUJA 000205

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED  
SIPDIS

DEPT PASS TO USTR- AGAMA, USTDA - FITS/MARIN, EXIM - JRICHTER  
DOT FOR FAA MEL CINTRON  
DEPT PASS TO USAID/AFR FOR ATWOOD

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EINV](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: BA BOEING 777 EMERGENCY LANDING

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On January 24, 2009 British Airways (BA) flight 82 bound for London Heathrow Airport made an emergency landing at Kano airport in Northern Nigeria just an hour after takeoff from Abuja airport due to mechanical problems. The Boeing 777 landed without incident and there were no injuries, according to officials at the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA). Boeing officials do not consider the incident a major event. Media reports of poor treatment towards passengers caused the NCAA to publicly criticize BA. Considering Nigeria's aviation safety record, any incident no matter how minor raises alarm bells. The fact that the plane landed safely and no injuries took place is a testament to BA's professionalism and is a positive sign from the Kano airport's emergency response team.  
END SUMMARY.

What Happened?  
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¶2. (SBU) Following the landing in Kano, several contradictory media reports were published on the reasons for the stop in Kano. On January 28, 2009 Fidelia Onoghaife, the personal assistant to NCAA Director General Demuren told EconOff that BA flight 82 made an unscheduled landing at approximately 5:30 p.m. on January 24, 2008, just an hour after takeoff, from Abuja Airport, Nigeria due to mechanical problems. The flight crew of the Boeing 777 detected smoke in the cockpit on its journey from London to Abuja. The plane was inspected by BA maintenance crews in Abuja, which delayed its takeoff until the BA maintenance and engineering team certified the repair. The problem was identified as contamination in the air conditioning and pressurization system.

¶3. (SBU) About an hour after takeoff from Abuja to London the crew again detected smoke, radioed Kano airport, and received permission for a priority landing for inspection and repair. The plane landed without incident and no injuries. As a precaution the Kano airport emergency crews were scrambled to meet the plane. Onoghaife said that the crew followed procedures in landing at Kano airport.

¶4. (SBU) Boeing International Director Chamsou Adjorin told EconOff on January 28, 2008 that Boeing had no inquiries on the incident either from the media or from BA. He said when incidents occur in operation, Boeing compiles the information for analysis to identify safety issues and occurrence rates, and based on findings, issue recommendations or instruction for product or operation improvement.

Negative Media Reports  
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¶5. (SBU) Following the landing in Kano, media reports circulated that passengers were treated poorly by BA. The NCAA publicly rebuked the airline alleged "poor" treatment of passengers and demanded compensation for every passenger. A major complaint was that passengers were not immediately transported to nearby Kano hotels then and were sent to Abuja while the alternate transportation

arrangements were made. BA officials told the NCAA that the passengers were kept onboard the plane while in Kano for security reasons. The passengers were kept comfortable and supplied with food and beverages.

Comment

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16. (SBU) Nigeria is taking concrete steps to improve its aviation safety record; in part because of USG engagement via a Public Private Partnership among the USG, Nigerian government and private sector stakeholders. The quick action by the crew averted any further incident and speaks to the professionalism exhibited by the airline and public aviation officials in Kano. The Nigerian public is very sensitive to any perceived slight towards passengers from foreign airline operators because of past incidents and media is quick to portray the worst. Given Nigeria's efforts to overcome its poor safety record, it is a good signal to see a Nigerian airport following safety procedures.

17. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.

SANDERS